

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 INR-10

LAB-06 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 NIC-01 DODE-00 PA-04

USIA-15 PRS-01 SPC-03 SCI-06 EPA-04 CEQ-02 DRC-01

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R 181127Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY OSLO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7662

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS UNN

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY GENEVA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 OSLO 0272

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB ILO XG NO

SUBJ: NEW INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY OF NORWEGIAN TRADE UNION

FEDERATION DISCUSSES EUROPEAN TRADE UNION MEETING, EAST-
WEST CONTACTS AND RELATIONS WITH AFL-CIO

REF: OSLO 221

SUMMARY. NORWEGIANS EXPECT GENEVA EAST-WEST LABOR MEETING TO
BE LOW-KEY AND INFORMAL, WITHOUT PROPAGANDA OR BLATANT
POLITICAL EXPLOITATION BY EAST. NORWEGIANS CONFIDENT WEST CAN
FOCUS DISCUSSION ON SUBSTANCE OF PRACTICAL PROBLEMS
(POLLUTION, SAFETY, WAGES, ETC.) TO SEE OF POSSIBILITIES
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FOR FRUITFUL COOPERATION ON THESE QUESTIONS EXIST. MEETING

WILL PROBABLY ESTABLISH A SMALL WORKING GROUP TO CONTINUE THIS EXPLORATION AND MAY DECIDE PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER COOPERATION JUSTIFY HOLDING AN ALL-EUROPEAN TRADE UNION CONFERENCE THIS YEAR OR NEXT, ALTHOUGH THIS DECISION MAY BE LEFT TO WORKING GROUP. NORWEGIANS EXPECT EAST TO SHOW NECESSARY RESTRAINT AND WILLINGNESS TO STICK TO PRACTICAL PROBLEMS SO THAT PROCESS WILL GO FORWARD AND ALL-EUROPEAN CONFERENCE WILL BE HELD. NORWEGIANS FEEL PROBLEMS CREATED BY INTERACTION OF TWO ADJACENT BUT SEPARATE AND DIFFERENT MODERN INDUSTRIAL SOCIETIES MAKE SUCH COOPERATION NECESSARY FOR BOTH SIDES. HOWEVER, THEY ARE PREPARED TO BREAK OFF CONTACTS IF EAST EXPLOITS THEM IMPROPERLY. NORWEGIANS GREATLY REGRET ABSENCE OF AFL-CIO FROM ICFTU AND RELATIVE LACK OF CONTACT BETWEEN US AND NORWEGIAN LABOR MOVEMENTS. NORWEGIAN LABOR WANTS TO STRENGTHEN TIES TO US LABOR. END SUMMARY.

1. IN JANUARY 15 CONVERSATION WITH LABATT, NORWEGIAN TRADE UNION FEDERATION (LO) INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY KAARE SANDEGREN SAID ALMOST EVERYTHING ABOUT GENEVA TRADE UNION MEETING IS PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE. EAST EUROPEANS WILL CAUCUS JANUARY 17 AND 18, SCANDINAVIANS EVENING OF JANUARY 17 AND, PERHAPS, ALL WEST EUROPEANS JANUARY 18. INFORMAL MEETING WILL TAKE PLACE JANUARY 19 AND PERHAPS 20. QUESTIONS WILL BE 1) SELECTION OF CHAIRMAN(MEN), 2) EXPLORATION OF WHETHER FURTHER CONTACT AND COOPERATION POSSIBLE AND, IF SO, ON WHAT SUBJECTS, 3) SELECTION OF STANDING COMMITTEE TO CONTINUE EXPLORATION AND 4) DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO HOLD ALL-EUROPEAN CONFERENCE--WHICH WILL PROBABLY BE LEFT TO STANDING COMMITTEE TO DECIDE. WEST, SAID SANDEGREN, WILL SEE THAT DISCUSSION FOCUSSES ON SUBSTANCE OF PRACTICAL PROBLEMS TO SEE IF BASIS FOR CONTINUING CONTACTS AND FUTURE COOPERATION EXISTS. MEETING WILL BE EXPLORATORY AND WEST EUROPEANS WANT TO KEEP IT AS LOW KEY AS POSSIBLE, THOUGH PRESS INTEREST IS UNAVOIDABLE. EAST SEEMS TO BE COOPERATING SO FAR IN KEEPING IT LOW KEY AND AVOIDING PROPAGANDA. DEGREE OF COMMUNISTS' RESTRAINT WILL DEMONSTRATE WHETHER THEY HAVE THE "WISDOM" TO KEEP THE PROCESS GOING.

2. THE WEST RUNS RISKS IN SUCH CONTACTS, SAID SANDEGREN
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BUT SO DOES EAST, IN THAT IT IS HARD FOR THEM TO JUDGE WHAT EFFECTS CONTINUING AND BROADENING TRADE UNION CONTACTS MAY HAVE ON THEIR MAINTENANCE OF CLOSED, REPRESSIVE SOCIETIES. NORWEGIANS HAVE NO ILLUSIONS AS TO NATURE OF EASTERN "UNIONS", WHICH ARE ORGANS OF STATE CONTROL; NEVERTHELESS THEY ARE CHANNELS TO, IF NOT FROM, WORKERS, AND THEIR LEADERS ARE COMPETITORS FOR POLITICAL INFLUENCE. EAST AND WEST EUROPE ARE ADJACENT INDUSTRIAL SOCIETIES

WHICH UNAVOIDABLY AFFECT ONE ANOTHER. WESTERN UNIONS HAVE INTERESTS TO DEFEND AND MUST EXPLORE THIS CONTACT TO SEE IF IT CAN BE USED. NORWAY'S MAIN INTEREST IS IN STOPPING THE "ACID RAIN" DESTROYING SOUTHERN NORWAY AS A PLACE TO LIVE AND WORK. TO DO THIS, POLLUTION MUST BE CONTROLLED IN EAST AS WELL AS WEST EUROPE. OTHER WEST EUROPEAN LABOR MOVEMENTS HAVE OTHER INTERESTS, PARTICULARLY IN SEEING THAT STRONG WORK "ENVIRONMENT", HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES ARE ADOPTED IN EAST EUROPE AS WELL AS WEST, SO COMPETITIVE RELATIONS ARE NOT UPSET AND JOBS ARE NOT LOST TO THE EAST. GERMAN UNIONS SUPPORT BRANDT GOVERNMENT'S "EAST" POLICY, WHILE BRITISH HAVE INTERNAL UNION PRESSURES FOR INCREASED CONTACTS. SOME, PARTICULARLY DANES, ARE MORE SKEPTICAL THAN OTHERS AS TO VALUE OF CONTACTS AND PROSPECTS FOR SUCCESS. INTEREST OF EASTERN "UNIONS" IS PREDOMINANTLY POLITICAL, AT LEAST NOW, BUT EXPERIENCE WILL SOON SHOW IF THEY ARE "WISE" ENOUGH TO SHOW SUBTLETY IN THIS REGARD AND KEEP THE PROCESS ALIVE. IN LONG RUN, THEY WILL PROBABLY COME TO REALIZE THAT PROXIMITY AND INTERACTION OF TWO

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 OSLO 0272

DIFFERENTLY-ORGANIZED MODERN INDUSTRIAL SOCIETIES CAUSES
PRACTICAL PROBLEMS THEY ALSO WANT SOLVED.

3. US UNIONS CAN OF COURSE "SIT BACK ACROSS WATER AND
HOLD SELVES ALOOF," SINCE PRACTICAL PROBLEMS DO NOT
AFFECT THEM SO DIRECTLY, SAID SANDEGREN, BUT THIS IS
UNFORTUNATE. BOTH WEST EUROPEAN AND US LABOR WOULD
BENEFIT FROM MORE CONTACT AND INTERCHANGE OF OPINION
AND EXPERIENCES IN REGARD TO EAST-WEST CONTACTS, IN FACT
MUTUAL CONTACTS WOULD BE GOOD FOR ALL THREE. ALSO, ALTHOUGH
SANDEGREN DISAGREES WITH AFL-CIO POSITION ON DETENTE, HE
FEELS THERE ARE MANY PRACTICAL AREAS FOR IMMEDIATE COOPERATION;
PROBLEMS SUCH AS EFFECTS OF AND RELATIONSHIP WITH MULTINATIONAL
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CORPORATIONS ARE IMPORTANT FOR US LABOR MOVEMENTS AS
WELL AS WEST EUROPEANS. SANDEGREN EXPRESSED HIS STRONG
INTEREST IN RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF TIES WITH US LABOR,
BOTH BETWEEN NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS (LO AND AFL-CIO)
AND BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL UNIONS IN BOTH COUNTRIES, AS
WELL AS HOPE THAT WAY CAN BE FOUND TO BRING AFL-CIO BACK
INTO ICFTU. WHEN ASKED WHAT HE HAD THOUGHT OF DOING IN
THAT REGARD, HE SAID HE HOPED CONVERSATION WITH LABATT
WOULD BE STEP IN THAT DIRECTION AND SAID HE WOULD PHONE
WHEN HE RETURNED FROM GENEVA MEETING AND ETUC MEETING
THEREAFTER TO SET UP MEETING TO DISCUSS RESULTS.

4. COMMENT. NORWEGIAN SUPPORT FOR EXPANSION OF EAST-
WEST TRADE UNION COOPERATION AND CONTACTS IS LIKELY TO
CONTINUE AS LONG AS COMMUNIST BLOC UNIONS STICK TO
PRACTICAL PROBLEMS AND AVOID POLITICAL PROPAGANDA. HOWEVER,
ASPENGREN'S PUBLIC (SEE REFTEL) AND SANDEGREN'S PRIVATE
EMPHASIS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF RE-ESTABLISHING FRIENDSHIP
WITH AMERICAN LABOR MAY BE A POSITIVE SIGN. ALSO POSITIVE
IS THAT SANDEGREN HAS REPLACED FORMER INTERNATIONAL
SECRETARY THORVALD STOLTENBERG, WHO IS NOW UNDER SECRETARY
IN MINISTRY OF DEFENSE. WHILE SANDEGREN HAS BROUGHT NO
INSTANTANEOUS CHANGE OF POLICY WITH HIM, THERE IS A
NOTICEABLY CHANGE OF ATTITUDE IN THE DIRECTION OF MORE
OPEN FRANKNESS AND FRIENDLINESS. ALTHOUGH HE, LIKE
STOLTENBERG, IS A CAREER DIPLOMAT BY PROFESSION, HIS
STYLE IS MUCH MORE DOWN TO EARTH AND HIS FAMILY BACKGROUND
AND PERSONAL ROOTS ARE IN THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT. WHEN
LABATT COMMENTED THAT SANDEGREN HAD COME TO LO FROM THE

FOREIGN SERVICE, HE REPLIED NO HE CAME FROM THE LABOR
MOVEMENT, HE HAD "VISITED" THE FOREIGN SERVICE FOR AWHILE,
BUT NOW HE HAD COME BACK HOME.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TRADE, EAST WEST TRADE, LABOR UNIONS, MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 JAN 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974OSLO00272
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: OSLO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740132/aaaabdrf.tel
Line Count: 227
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: OSLO 221
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <01 APR 2002 by kellew0>; APPROVED <28 MAY 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NEW INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY OF NORWEGIAN TRADE UNION FEDERATION DISCUSSES EUROPEAN TRADE UNION MEETING, EAST-
TAGS: ELAB, XG, NO, ILO
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005